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## THEY JUST WON'T TALK!

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

THE characters are: Joe Ellis, a business man of about 35; Mabel, his wife, both of them plump, good-natured, homey people; Mrs. Corey, a neighbor, a woman somewhat past middle age; Miss Spangler, a school teacher; Bobbie, the little son of Joe and Mabel; and George, Mabel's brother, just home from the war.

The time is late fall, a few weeks after the Armistice.

At the opening of the play, the stage is empty. The telephone rings and Mabel hurries in from a door at the left. She wears an apron, and appears to have been called away from some kitchen task. She takes down the receiver:

MABEL: Yes? . . . Oh, yes, Miss Spangler. . . No, he hasn't come yet, but we're expecting him in time for dinner. . . . What's that? . . . You'd like to see him? Of course you would. He always thought so much of you. You were his favorite teacher. . . No, we haven't seen him yet ourselves. He only landed a week ago, you know, and he's been at mother's, resting quietly. But we couldn't wait any longer, so he is coming over today to have dinner with us. . . No, driving, with one of his pals. . . Yes, we can scarcely wait. He'll have so much to tell us. . . Yes, I know that; so many of the boys seem to be that way. . . They don't seem to want to talk about it. But George won't be like that. You know what a talker he always was. I guess you know that all right, in your classes in history especially. Why, when he was just a little chap, he knew all the story of the battle of Gettysburg, all the flank movements and everything; it was just wonderful. . . Yes, we are proud of him, and I guess you as his teacher had a hand in it too. George always said you were a wonderful history teacher. . . Yes, do run in. . . I know he'll want to see you too. . . Good bye.

(As she is hanging up the receiver Bobbie rushes in. He is wearing a soldier hat and carrying a wooden gun.)

BOBBIE: Oh, mamma, mamma. See what Uncle Bill made for me. (Holds out gun.)

MABEL: Why, Bobbie, isn't that lovely.

BOBBIE (putting gun to shoulder): Bang! Bang! Bang! That's the way it goes, mamma. That's the way to shoot the heinies down.

MABEL (indulgently): Heinies! Where did you pick that up?

BOBBIE: In school. We played a game . . . (a tap at the door, left, and Mrs. Cory looks in.)

MRS. CORY: May I come in? Has the hero arrived?



MABEL: No, not yet. But we're expecting him, any minute.

MRS. CORY: I just couldn't wait. I'm so anxious to see him and to hear all about it. (*Catches sight of Bobbie, who stands at attention, his gun in place.*) Well! Who have we here? Another little soldier! (*draws herself up in a military manner and salutes. Bobbie gravely returns the salute. Both women laugh.*) Isn't that too cute!

BOBBY (*confidentially*): It's just a play gun. But Daddy says when I'm bigger I'll have a real one.

MRS. CORY (*patting his shoulder*): Of course you will. You're going to grow up to be a big, brave boy, just like your Uncle George. (*To Mabel*) I declare, it doesn't seem any time, does it, since George was his size?

MABEL: No time at all. They do grow up so fast. (*To Bobbie*) Put the gun away now, dear, and run down to the store on an errand for mamma. Tell Mr. Smith to give you the order that mamma telephoned.

BOBBIE: Mayn't I carry my gun?

MABEL: No, dear. I'd save that to show Uncle George when he comes.

BOBBIE: All right. (*Runs out, right.*)

MRS. CORY: The darling! Well, I'll be running along. I'll look in again. (*They move toward the door, left, and meet Joe Ellis coming in.*)

JOE: Well, well. Has our hero showed up yet? How'd do, Mrs. Cory. (*Looking around*) Not here yet, eh?

MRS. CORY: How'd do, Mr. Ellis.

MABEL: No, not yet. But he'll be here in time for dinner.

JOE (*as he goes through the business of removing hat and coat—stepping out of door to hang them in hallway—talking continuously*): Yeh, you can trust a boy to come in time for dinner. And I guess

our doughboys won't be any different from the others in that respect. Pies like mother used to make are going to taste pretty good to them. . . Still (*wistfully*), it must be a great life—that camp life—toting your own cooking kit and all that . . . great experience they've all had!

MRS. CORY: It's going to be so exciting to hear about it from some one who was actually there. You know the only returned soldier we've had in town is Mrs. Tolliver's Herbie. And he is a little bit queer, you know. He was gassed or shell-shocked or something, and he won't say a word. He runs away, they say, when callers come. He just won't talk!

MABEL (*thoughtfully*): Miss Spangler was saying this morning that so many of the boys are like that. They just won't talk.

MRS. CORY: Oh, but George won't be that way. (*With concern*) He's all right, isn't he?

JOE: Sound as a nut. Came through without a scratch.

MRS. CORY: You ought to be so thankful. Well, I'll run in again.

MABEL: Yes, do. (*As Mrs. Cory goes*) Joe, you don't think George will be queer—like Herbie Tolliver—do you?

JOE (*with something like a snort*): George! Well, I should say not. Oh, of course he won't brag. No really brave man does. I imagine it may take quite a little prodding to get the real stuff out of him—like the story of the night he went over the top and won the medal for unusual bravery in action. But it will come. Jinks! Makes a fellow like me feel old and out of it, to think of all those young chaps have seen and done! I guess, Mabel, we're the fellows this war hit hardest—just too old to be in it!

MABEL: Yes, I appreciate how you feel about it, Joe. But just the same . . . I know I oughtn't to say this . . . but just



the same, I'm glad! Now come on, if you'll just give the freezer a few turns. (*Starts for the door, right. At this moment Bobbie bursts in.*)

BOBBIE: Mamma, Mamma, he's here. He's in town. I heard it at the store. They drove in a little bit ago and stopped at Tolliver's to see Herbie. He'll be here right away!

(*Joe and Mabel hasten to the other door.*)

MABEL: And here he is. (*Runs out, calling*) George, George.

JOE: Hail the conquering hero!

GEORGE (*enters, Mabel clinging to him, her arms around his neck. Joe grabs his hand and pumps it up and down—both cry out in unison.*).

MABEL: George, you old dear, it's so good to see you.

JOE: Well, well, how's the boy!

GEORGE: Say, it's great to see you folks!

JOE: But where's the little old uniform?

GEORGE: Say, how long do you think it took me to get out of that? (*Taking off overcoat.*)

JOE: Civies looked pretty good to you, did they? (*Taking George's coat.*)

GEORGE (*shortly*): I'll say. (*Catches sight of Bobbie.*) Well, don't tell me this is Bobbie. Bobbie, you old skeezix, what you mean growing up like that? Trying to bump your head against the ceiling? (*Grabs him and boosts him up.*)

BOBBIE (*as he comes down*): Where's your medal?

GEORGE (*embarrassed*): I only wear that on Sundays.

BOBBIE: Aw! Why didn't you wear it today? (*Eagerly*) Did they give it to you for killing a German, Uncle George?

GEORGE: Let's see, Bobbie, how far are you along in school now? Must be in second grade.

BOBBIE: Second grade, nothing! I'm way

past that. Say, Uncle George, was he a great big German?

JOE (*slapping George on the back*): Bobbie's got the right idea, old man. We want to hear all about it.

MABEL (*slipping her arm through George's*) Of course we do, but let's give him time to catch his breath first. Come, sit down, George. (*Pulls him over to a couch or chair, sits near him. Joe pulls up a chair half facing him, Bobbie stands near.*)

GEORGE (*rather hurriedly*): Gee, there are more questions I want to ask you folks. How's . . .

MABEL: Everybody in town is just crazy to see you, George. Miss Spangler called up.

GEORGE: That so? She was always a good old scout. How is she?

MABEL: Just fine, and can hardly wait to hear your stories. She thinks you could give her such good material for her history classes.

GEORGE (*rather cynically*): Huh! Maybe I could. (*More vivaciously*) And how's old Doc. Spangler—spry as ever?

JOE: Gee, George, when I think of some of the experiences you young fellows have had.

GEORGE: Old Doc must be all of ninety, seems to me. How is the old boy?

JOE: Doesn't look a day over sixty. Just how does it feel, George, when the order comes to go over the top at daybreak? Say, that must be . . .

GEORGE (*turning to Mabel*): I suppose Cousin Sue Bromley is getting to be quite a girl by now.

MABEL: Yes, Sue's almost a young lady. George, did you ever feel afraid, or did the excitement just sort of carry you along?

GEORGE: Well, if all the youngsters have grown as fast as Skeezix here . . .



Skeezix, have you got a dog? Seems to me a boy your size ought to have.

JOE: I expect those Heinies were pretty ugly customers. Did you ever come face to face with one?

*(George looks from one to the other, harassed. Perhaps Mabel has an inkling of his feeling.)*

MABEL *(springing up)*: See here, you boys, I've got a dinner to tend to. I hardly expected you before one-thirty, George. And, Joe, if you start George on his stories while I'm away I'm going to be good and mad. So let's postpone the talk till after dinner. Anyway, Joe, it's time for you to look after that freezer.

BOBBIE: We're going to have ice-cream. It's maple, the kind you like.

GEORGE: Say, that's worth coming home for!

MABEL: Bobbie! That was a secret. Maybe you'd better come along with mother now, dear. I may want you to run another errand.

*(Bobbie puts his arm around his mother's neck and whispers. She nods and he runs out. Mabel follows.)*

JOE *(lingering)*: I hear you stopped in to see Herbie Tolliver. He's in quite a bad way, I guess.

GEORGE *(shortly)*: Yes.

JOE: Many of 'em in that state?

GEORGE: Yes, quite a few.

JOE: Just what is the cause, do you think? I know they call it shell shock, but you wouldn't think that just a noise—still, I suppose the steady firing of those big guns kind of gets on your nerves.

GEORGE *(shortly)*: Yes.

MABEL *(entering)*: That freezer, dear—it needs attention. If you'll see to it while I run over to Mrs. Cory's a minute, we'll be all ready. *(To George)* You won't mind being left alone, George dear. Din-

ner's going to be ready in a few minutes. You must be starved.

GEORGE: Sure, that's all right. Can I help with the freezer or anything?

JOE: I should say not. We don't have a hero come home every day.

*(Exit Joe right, Mabel left.)*

JOE *(as he goes)*: But don't think you are going to get out of telling all about it. We're just postponing the session. We're going to know how you won that medal!

*(George sits alone. Runs his hand through his hair and sits moodily, his head on his hand.)*

*(The door opens, and Bobbie appears. He is carrying his soldier gun. Bobbie hesitates a minute, then dashes into the room, aiming here and there and crying: Bang!)*

BOBBIE: Bang! Bang! Bang!

*(George starts, sits upright. Bobbie comes to a stop in front of him, stands at attention and salutes.)*

BOBBIE: That's the way to shoot Germans, isn't it, Uncle George?

GEORGE *(rising sternly—not returning salute)*: Where did you get that?

BOBBIE: Uncle Bill gave it to me. He cut it out of wood. See *(hands him the gun)*. It isn't real, of course, just pretend.

*(George takes it and holds it thoughtfully. After a pause, he looks at Bobbie.)*

GEORGE: Kid, what is there you'd most like to have? Got a baseball outfit—bat—ball—mask—mit?

BOBBIE: Dad's going to give me one next birthday. That's in May.

GEORGE: That's so. It's a little late in the season for baseball, isn't it? And football too, I suppose. How about a sled? Have you got a good coaster?

BOBBIE: Yes, I got one last Christmas. She's a dandy, too. Wish it would snow pretty soon.

GEORGE: It will, and freeze too. Suppose you have skates?



BOBBIE: Yes, but they buckle on with straps!

GEORGE: With straps! Why, a kid your size ought to have a pair of real skates.

BOBBIE: That's what I say. Shoe skates. But Dad says not till my feet stop growing.

GEORGE (*puts his hand in pocket and brings out a bill*): Do you know what that is?

BOBBIE: Sure, I know what that is.

GEORGE: Could we get a pair of shoe skates for that?

BOBBIE: I should say we could.

GEORGE: All right, Bobbie, I'll make a bargain with you. If you are willing to sell this gun—and you might throw in that hat too—I'll give you this bill.

BOBBIE: Sell my gun?

GEORGE: That's what I said.

BOBBIE: Sure I will, but it's a lot of money to give for it.

GEORGE: That's all right. It's my bargain. Do you agree?

BOBBIE: Yes, I agree.

GEORGE: All right, and I'll take the hat. (*Bobbie hands it over, puzzled, and takes the bill George offers him.*)

GEORGE (*stuffing hat in his pocket*): And now this gun is mine. You understand, you've sold it to me?

BOBBIE: Yes.

GEORGE: All right, then! (*With an intent gaze fixed on Bobbie, he snaps it across his knee—tosses the two pieces aside.*)

BOBBIE: Uncle George, my gun!

GEORGE: No, my gun. I bought it.

BOBBIE (*puzzled*): Yes . . .

GEORGE (*hands on Bobbie's shoulders*): Listen here, kid. You wouldn't understand much of what I could say to you. But I want you to remember this day. The day your Uncle George came home from war. I want you to remember it when you are a big boy—a man—like me.

When they begin to talk to you maybe about another war and glory and honor and all that, I want you to remember that there was a war back here when you were just a kid, and that your Uncle George was in it. And that they had told him it was going to be a war to end all wars. And that he was what they call a good soldier. They gave him a medal for being what they called a good soldier—and I'd hate to have to tell a youngster your age what that means—but never mind that; what I want you to remember is this: On the day your Uncle George came home he did that (*pointing to the broken gun*) and he said—now listen—these are the only words I'm going to ask you to remember—he said: "That's what should be done to all of them." Can you remember that?

BOBBIE: I can remember.

GEORGE: Sure? Cross your heart now and say I'll remember.

BOBBIE (*solemnly*): I'll remember.

(*Voices outside.*)

MABEL: I'll just let you have a glimpse of him. But, remember, I won't have him kept from his dinner.

GEORGE: Here, let's beat it, kid, after those skates. (*They hurry out by the back door.*)

(*Mabel, Mrs. Cory, and Miss Spangler enter.*)

MISS SPANGLER: All we ask now is just a glimpse to be sure he is all right.

MRS. CORY: Yes, just to see . . .

MABEL: He's here with Bobbie. Why!

MRS. CORY AND MRS. SPANGLER: Why!

MABEL: Where have they gone? They were here . . .

MISS SPANGLER: Oh, how disappointing.

MRS. CORY: You don't suppose he saw us coming and ran? You know Herbie . . .

MRS. SPANGLER (*in distress*): But not George.



MABEL (*sees the broken gun and picks it up*): What's this?

MRS. CORY: Bobbie's gun.

MABEL: What happened to it? It's broken.

MRS. CORY: How strange.

MABEL: He must have dropped it. Stepped on it.

MRS. CORY: You don't suppose George—you know some of them are queer.

MISS SPANGLER: But not George!

MABEL: George is perfectly normal.

MRS. CORY: Herbie Tolliver *looks* perfectly normal. And you know he runs when visitors come. And when I tried to speak to him on the street, to tell him how proud I was of him, he spoke dreadfully to me; he used *language*!

MISS SPANGLER: I hope you aren't comparing Herbie Tolliver to George!

MABEL: George is perfectly all right, in every way, and if you will run in again after dinner, you will find him here and glad to see you.

MISS SPANGLER: We'll come again, but I'm beginning to think he won't tell us much. You know it's the most curious thing, you would think they would love to tell their adventures.

MRS. CORY: No, they just won't talk.

MISS SPANGLER: It's the strangest thing.

MABEL (*seeing them out the door*): Isn't it the strangest thing?

(*She turns, walks back a step or two, faces the audience. Looks at the broken gun that she is still holding in her hands. Repeats*): The strangest thing! (*Looks up with a puzzled frown.*)

[CURTAIN]

MARY KATHARINE REELY

Julius Goldman, of the New York banking firm of Goldman, Sachs and Company, has given \$10,000 to the Johns Hopkins University for research in geology.

## A FOURTH GRADE PLAN IN ART

EDITOR'S NOTE:—This plan is selected for publication for three reasons. First, there is no waste in it. Miss Frey's thinking was centered not on making a lesson plan, but in guiding her class effectively. Second, the work is a good example of the plan that the Harrisonburg Training School has adopted tentatively; the lesson is thought through in phrases or steps, and there is no useless writing out of details. Third, the lesson is in accord with educational principles in that a technical principle in art was taught very definitely, but taught at a time when the class had a real need for it.—K. M. A.

### *Preliminary Data*

Grade: Fourth

Major unit: Christmas decorations

Minor unit: To teach proportion in figure drawing

Time allowance: One fifty-minute period

Materials: (A) Teacher's

- (1) Paper figures with skeletons drawn in black ink
- (2) Illustrative figures on the blackboard
- (3) A snow scene border on the blackboard, done in white and colored crayons
- (4) Rhymes to suggest poses<sup>1</sup>

Santa Claus stands at tall attention  
Listening for every sound,  
Fills the stockings quietly, quietly  
Then up the chimney at one bound.

Santa was kneeling there on the floor  
Filling my stocking with goodies galore.

Flying like arrows over the ice  
If we'd fall 'twould be funny, but  
would it be nice?

What ho, the snow!  
We'll roll it in a ball,  
And soon we'll have a snowman here  
Cold and white and tall.

- (5) Rules for proportion

From the ankle to the knee equals  
from the knee to the trunk.

<sup>1</sup>These rhymes were made by Miss Frey for this lesson and are therefore written out in the plan.